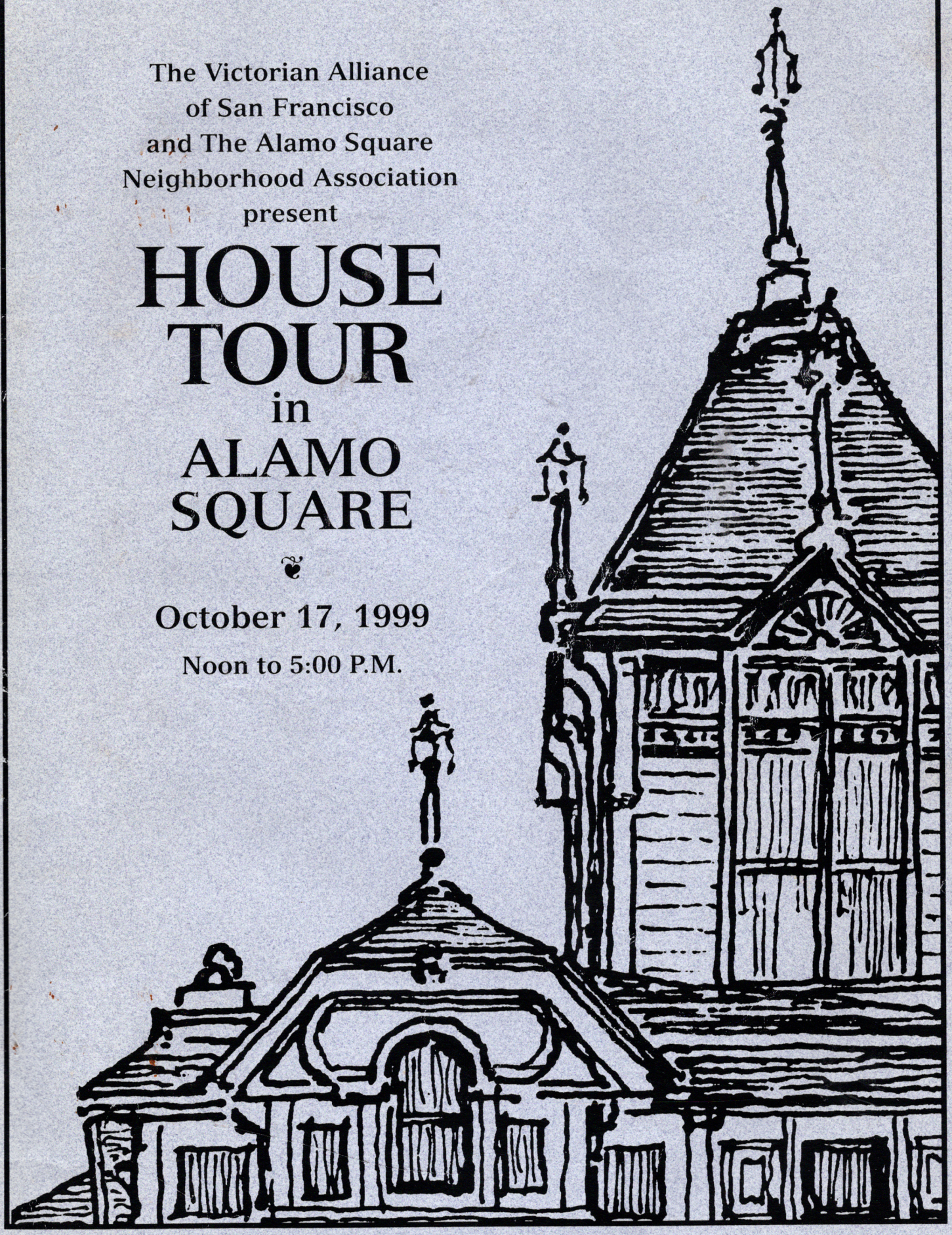
The Victorian Alliance
of San Francisco
and The Alamo Square
Neighborhood Association
present

HOUSE TOUR in ALAMO SQUARE

October 17, 1999

Noon to 5:00 P.M.



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WELCOME

Welcome to the 1999 House Tour of the Alamo Square Historic District. This year the tour is sponsored jointly by the Victorian Alliance and the Alamo Square Neighborhood Association, and we are pleased to present eight wonderful houses and a historic church, with refreshments served in an Edwardian school.

Celebrated for its "Postcard Row" of Queen Anne townhouses, Alamo Square is at the heart of a city-designated Historic District established in the 1980s. Most of its surrounding homes, dating from the late 1870s to 1930, were architect-designed for well to do downtown merchants. The City first reserved Alamo Hill and ten other sites for park lands in 1856-1857 under the mayoralty of James Van Ness, barely seven years after California acquired statehood. But it was not until 1892 that the rugged, rocky hill was graded and landscaped with formal pathways laid out. In 1896 the surrounding coping and eight grand, pillar-flanked stairways were constructed. As City Camp #22, Alamo Square provided temporary shelter for those made homeless by the great earthquake and fire of April 1906. By the early 1920s, apartment buildings began to replace the large corner mansions torn down after their pioneer families moved to newer neighborhoods. In the 1960s, neighborhood activists successfully enlisted the aid of then Mayor Joseph Alioto to suppress a proposal to level the park for a playing field. Mayor Dianne Feinstein visited the square in 1981 for a rededication ceremony which included the planting of cherry trees donated by Sumitomo Bank at the Pierce-Fulton and Grove-Steiner Street entrances.

We wish you a happy afternoon. Do enjoy some light refreshments served at the Ida B. Wells School and don't miss the Victorian Alliance Boutique.

Sincerely,
Bill Campbell, *President*
The Victorian Alliance of San Francisco

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700 BLOCK, STEINER ST. . . . ©JKW '95

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"View from Alamo Square, Sunday, Dec. 8, 1901, 1:30 P.M."
Photograph courtesy of California Historical Society, FN-26163

The building on the northeast of Steiner and Hayes, where the large white apartment building now stands, was the home of Rose Sutro Morbio. Note that the tower of old city hall can be seen behind the houses of "Postcard Row."

ALAMO SQUARE

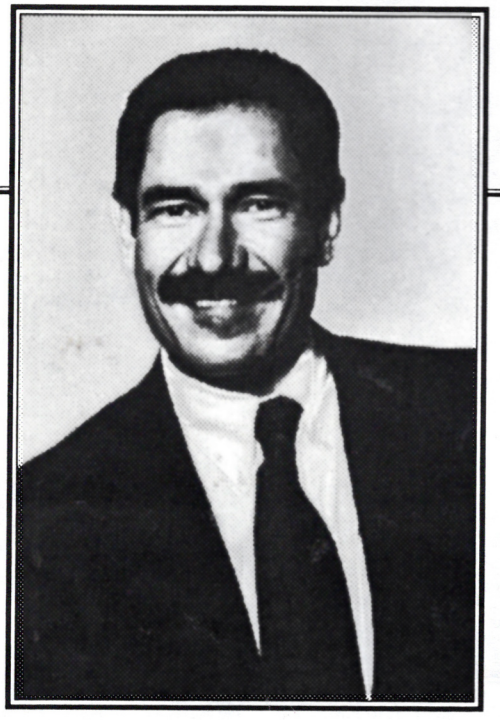
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 15372 SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94115

Welcome,

As President of the Alamo Square Neighborhood Association for 1999, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to a unique part of the world which we call home. The Alamo Square Neighborhood Association, or ASNA, plays an active role in the life of our community. Our mission is one of making our neighborhood a better place to live and visit, and in so doing, reflecting the strong foundations of our city and neighbors. ASNA is pleased to co-host, with the Victorian Alliance, this year's house tour.

The underlying sense of neighborhood that exists in our community goes above and beyond any historic district boundaries or designations. Our neighborhood's homes and park serve as nationally recognized icons of the City. The maintenance of these requires an ongoing commitment and special attention by both homeowners and the City. When these structures were being threatened with demolition, our neighborhood fought to establish the largest registered historic district of Victorian architecture in the City. The Park view of Postcard Row is now both emblematic of the city of San Francisco and of the successful efforts of our community elders. Not being able to rest on past laurels, our Neighborhood Association continues to play an active role overseeing one of San Francisco's most beautiful urban environments. Your tour today of some of our neighborhood's wonderful homes and one church will provide a sense of history and a glimpse of the future to be found in our community.

Sincerely,
Mark J. Topetcher,
ASNA President



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Tour House #1

710 STEINER STREET

The J. Frank Moroney House

710 STEINER ... ©JRW.'95

Carpenter-builder Matthew Kavanagh, while residing at 722 Steiner, constructed the Queen Anne Style dwelling at 710 Steiner Street in 1894 as the second house in his row of seven. Those in between, 712 through 720, were built the following year, in 1895.

710's first owner-occupants, who resided there until 1909, were newly-weds James Frank and Anna Hunt Moroney, who were both born of pioneer California families originating in New York. James Moroney was at various times employed as an agent for A.P. Hotaling's real estate firm; as president of his father-in-law's wholesale wine and liquor distillery; as secretary of the Pacific Stock Exchange; and, finally, as president of his own insurance firm. He was a member of the Native Sons, The Family, Bohemian, and Olympic Clubs. Anna, who was 19 when she married James, was described in one press release as "one of the most popular girls in the younger society set, as well as being acclaimed the most beautiful."

New owners in 1967, who began the first major restoration on the old house, were active in neighborhood efforts to thwart the Redevelopment Agency's plans to expand its renewal programs into the area.

The townhouses in "Postcard Row" are united in form but distinctive in detailing. 710 is individualized by its elaborately ornate gable, shingled surfaces, spindle-work and the pattern of its jewel-encrusted stained-glass windows. Original interior features include fireplace mantles, tiles, ceiling medallions, a dining-room floor parquet frieze in a Greek Key motif and a stained-glass panel painted in a country scene on the stair landing. San Francisco interior designer Paul Duchsherer acted as a consultant on the kitchen remodel. Wallpaper from Bradbury and Bradbury are featured in the downstairs hall washroom.

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Tour House #2

722 STEINER STREET

The Matthew Kavanaugh House

722 STEINER © J.Rowe. '88

"Postcard Row", perhaps the most recognizable cluster of Victorian townhouses in the United States, was erected over a period of four years, 1892 to 1895, by an Irish born carpenter-builder named Matthew Kavanaugh. He built 722 Steiner in 1892, the first in this row of Queen Anne townhouses, for himself and his wife, Catherine.

In the 1870s, Matthew had worked as a coachman for French realtor Joseph Emric and in the early 1880s as the latter's agent and collector. By the late 1880s he had become self employed as his own real estate developer. In addition to owning and developing most of the 700 block, Kavanaugh also had extensive holdings on the 800 block of Steiner, but was content to limit his construction there to two sets of flats: 812-814 and 896-898 erected in 1896 and 1888 respectively.

The Kavanaughs, who moved to Marin County at the turn of the century, are memorialized by their donation of a large and colorful stained-glass window circa 1898 featuring painted portraits of their patron saints, Catherine of Alexandria and Matthew the Apostle to their nearby parish church, Sacred Heart at Fillmore & Fell.

In 1975 the shingled Kavanaugh tower house had been condemned and was scheduled to be torn down as a parking lot for a neighboring institution until its purchase the same year by its present owner, Michael Shannon and his now deceased partner, James Vogeney, MD. The completely restored residence, which is often featured in films and television commercials, features working gaslight fixtures, fine antique and contemporary furnishings, a gourmet kitchen and splendid City views.

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Tour House #3

908 STEINER STREET

The Iverson House

The Stick-style Iverson House was built in 1888 at a cost of $4,370 to the designs of the architectural firm of Schmidt & Shea. Architect Peter Schmidt, who formed a partnership with his former draftsman, Frank Shea, in 1888, is best known for his commission at 2007 Franklin Street, the elaborately wrought Queen Anne Style Haas-Lillienthal House. Frank Shea who founded his own firm with his brother, William, in 1890, designed the nearby Archbishop's Mansion at Steiner and Fulton (#5 on this tour).

Schmidt & Shea's client at 908 Steiner was Danish immigrant Niels Iverson who first came to California via Cape Horn in 1848 at age 18. He later earned his living as a shipping merchant in real estate and in the lumber business. He and his family lived at 908 for eight years. After a succession of owners, St. Anthony's Dining Room purchased the property in 1956 for use as a homeless shelter. But the house is most noted for the period between 1966 and 1976 when it hosted a hippie commune and received national attention for its riotous color scheme, a joint effort of its residents. Labeled the "Psychedelic House," it featured a life sized reptilian sculpture attached to the facade.

The flat roofed Iverson House is a highly ornamented example of the rectilinear Stick style townhouse built in San Francisco's residential neighborhoods during the 1880s. Fence-like cresting originally lined the roofs of such homes. Stickwork is represented here by the vertical panels of the pilasters bordering the arched window-frames and by the long, ribbed corner-strips that merge into the cornice brackets. Its paint scheme features nine different colors.

908's interior is decorated in the Victorian Style. Among its many attractions are a striking "Liberty Bird" patterned wall-papered ceiling in the front parlor and at the end of the entry hall, a Turkish corner.

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864 FULTON STREET

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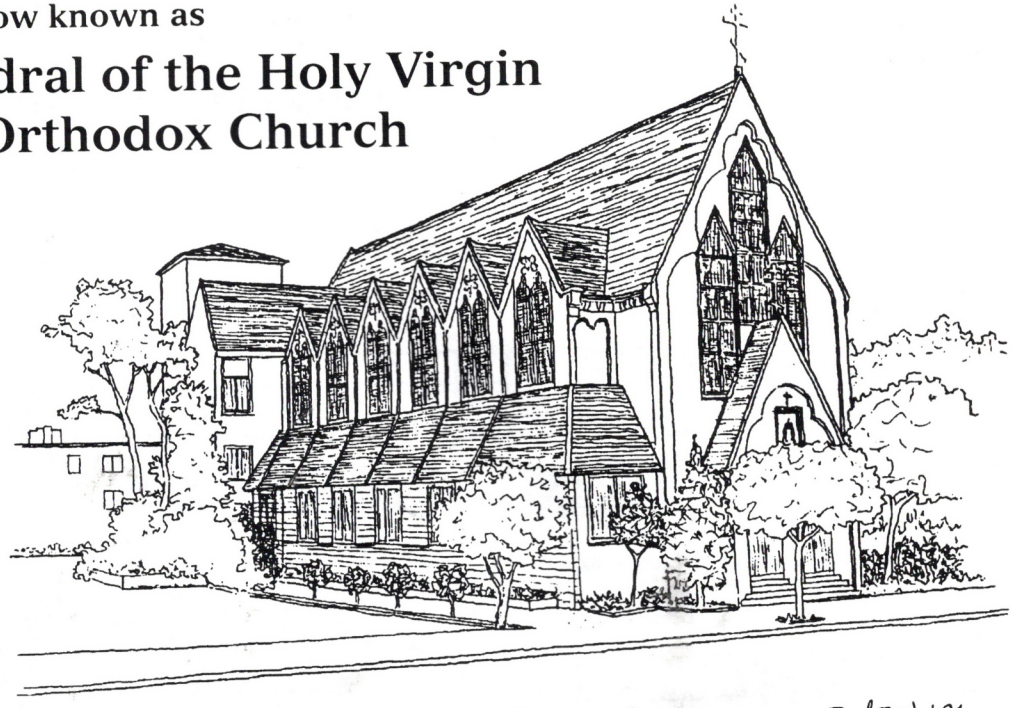

OLD CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY VIRGIN · · · © JRW '91

Designed by architects Wright and Sanders, the former St. Stephan's was built for a Protestant Episcopal congregation whose neighborhood roots extended back to 1871, when Sunday school classes were held at 132 Hayes Street and the parish itself operated from a rented room located at the northeast corner of Webster and Fulton. The Reverend Lion purchased the site at 864 Fulton in 1875, built a temporary chapel in 1876 and the intimately scaled Gothic Revival St. Stephan's in 1881.

In 1930, a large Russian Orthodox community which had fled Russia via China during the 1917-1919 Bolshevik Revolution and later settled in the northwestern area of the Western Addition purchased St. Stephan's. Designated City Landmark #28 by the Board of Supervisors in 1969, its formal title is the Old Cathedral of the Holy Virgin, Joy of All Who Sorrow, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Since 1961, when the congregation built the new, multi-domed Holy Virgin Cathedral at 6210 Geary, the church at 864 Fulton has been supported by less than twenty families.

Signal Gothic features of 864 Fulton's vertically arranged exterior include steeply pitched rooflines, sharply peaked window forms and tall, narrow stained glass panels. Symbols of its Eastern Orthodox community are the gold gilded crosses surmounting the front facing gables and the portico's icon which replaced the old St. Stephan's marker. The church's plaster facade, applied in the 1930s, covers original wood cladding and vertical panels in the "Stick" style.

Aside from the removal of its pews, the handsome redwood interior is largely intact, but reflecting Russian Orthodox tastes, is far more ornate than that of its Episcopal predecessor. In front of the altar is an elaborate screen or iconostas crafted to compliment the church's Gothic character. Above icon-filled lower walls, tall double stained glass windows, in rows of six, colorfully illuminate the nave. The floor is oak, while the arched beams overhead are of redwood.

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Tour House #5

1000 FULTON STREET

The Archbishop's Mansion

THE ARCHBISHOP'S MANSION · · · 1000 FULTON STREET © JRW. '88

San Francisco's second archbishop, Patrick Riordan, selected Catholic church architect Frank Shea to design this handsome French Second Empire structure. Built in 1904, 1000 Fulton survived the 1906 earthquake so well because it was constructed over bedrock and has a wood frame and a steel beam substructure.

Shortly after the quake, the Archbishop turned his mansion over to the Sisters of the Presentation, whose convent on Powell Street had been destroyed in the fire, and moved to San Mateo until the sisters' new quarters were completed. The last two prelates to reside in the residence were Archbishops Edward Hanna (1915-1935) and John Mitty (1935 1944).

In the 1940s the building became a home for boys who were honor students and orphaned or in placement. In the '70s, it served as a counseling center and offices for the Westside Lodge of Presbyterian Hospital. And, in the early ' 80s, after two years of extensive renovations, its present owners converted the Archbishop's Residence into an elegant Bed and Breakfast Inn.

Inside are 15 bedrooms with baths, first and second-floor parlors, a dining room that accommodates fifty, 18 fireplaces and a three-story, curved, mahogany staircase surmounted by an exquisite oval, leaded-glass skylight. The Archbishops Mansion has been designated City Landmark #151.

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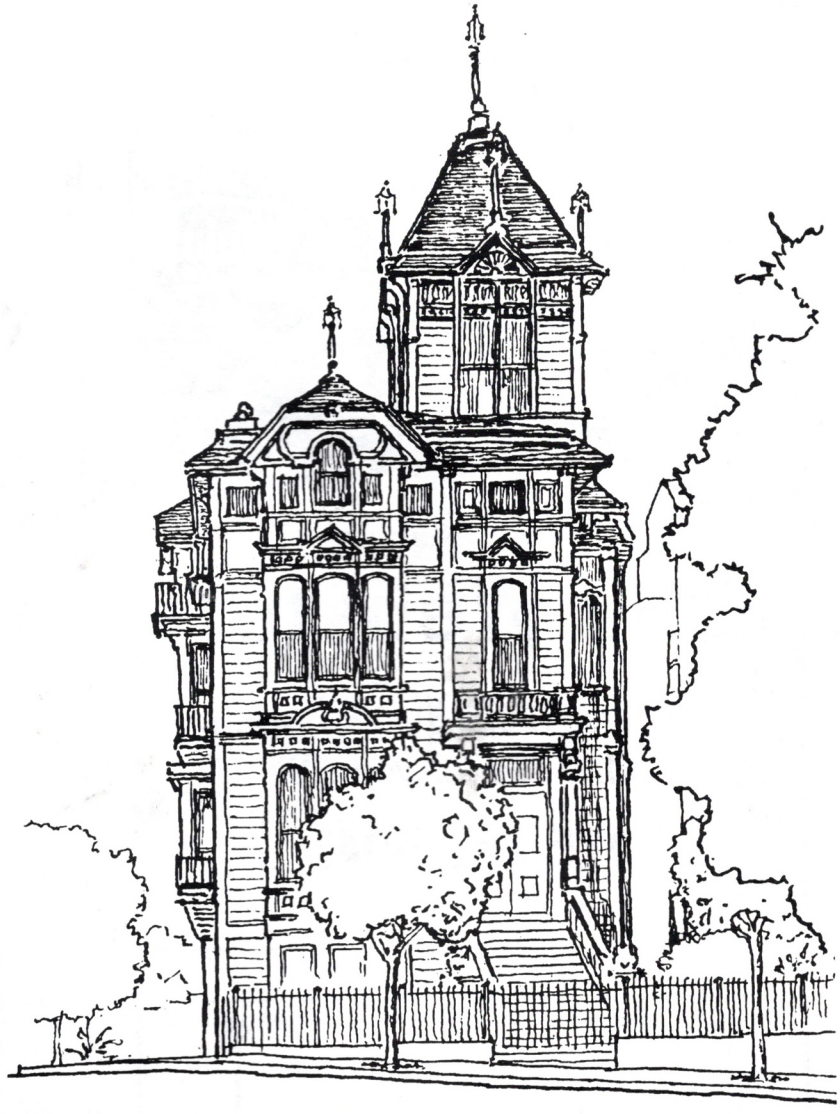
Tour House #6

1198 FULTON STREET

The Westerfeld House



1198 FULTON © JRW '88

Designated City Landmark #135, the Westerfeld House at 1198 Fulton Street is described in the Junior League's book, Here Today, as "an exceptionally picturesque version of the towered villa form, here seen in uncompromising Stick expression with the characteristic squared bay windows of the 1880s." It has four stories, 28 rooms and a tower. Built in 1889 to the plans of German born architect Henry Geilfuss, it retained, until the 1920s, a side yard with rose garden and carriage house.

The house's first owner, William Westerfeld, a native of Bremen, Germany, apprenticed as a youth to his uncle Louis in a bakery on Kearny; later he established his own confectionery and bakery on Market, where it was to become one of the best known in San Francisco.

In the late 1920s, a Russian community group purchased the house and opened a restaurant in the old ballroom. It's probable that the misnomer of "Russian Consulate", often applied to the house, came into being at this time.

Later, like many houses in the neighborhood, 1198 Fulton served time both as a boarding house and as a haven for hippies. Serious restoration began in the late 1970s under the ownership of Daniel Ducos and William Von Weiland. Daniel was the driving force behind the creation of the Alamo Square Historic District in the early 1980s.

Under the stewardship of its present owner, the house, featuring Renaissance Revival furnishings and dramatic wallpapers, has regained its original dignity and splendor.

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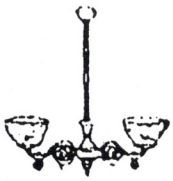

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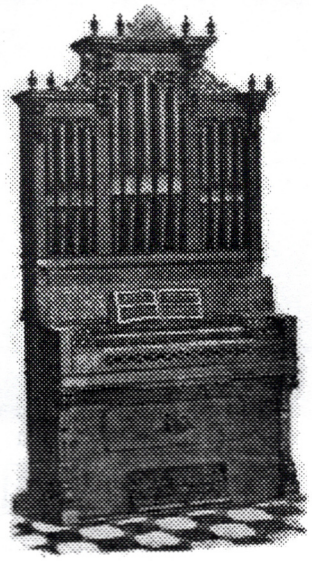

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Tour House #7

709 SCOTT STREET

The Thierbach House

709 SCOTT ST. . . . © JRW '98

Although most of the houses lining Scott Street's 700 block, a harmoniously scaled mix of two-storied Victorian and Edwardian era dwellings dating from 1895 to 1911, have lost both their old masonry retaining walls and the diminutive gardens that once grew behind them to driveways and garages, other architectural alterations have been few.

Exactly 100 years ago, in 1899, builder Joseph Bucher constructed 709 Scott Street at a cost of a little over $3,000 for coffee and spice merchant Charles Frederick Thierbach and his wife Emma. Architects for this Queen Anne style residence with Colonial Revival accents were David Salfield and Herman Kohlberg.

Notable features of its asymmetrical facade are a gabled hipped roof with corner tower, Palladian windows, balconies, a semi-circular portico supported by paired classical columns, and a decoratively tiled porch floor.

Vintage interior elements include well preserved and unusually detailed Lincrusta Walton wainscot, brass plated hardware, a mahogany staircase with built-in hall seat and finial capped newel posts, and two fireplace mantles, one fancily carved in birds-eye maple downstairs and one in oak on the second floor. The old attic level social hall, a grand room with a white-planked, peaked ceiling, is one of the few such neighborhood spaces not to have been converted to other uses.

The original owner Charles Thierbach (1849-1931), a native of Germany, came to San Francisco at age 16. He worked first at the Ghirardelli chocolate, coffee and spice factory and then as a driver for the Folger Coffee Company before establishing his own coffee and spice importing firm. The Thierbachs resided at 709 Scott until 1907.

In the mid-1950s, the Thierbach House became the block's third rest-home; it was converted back to single family residency in the 1980s.

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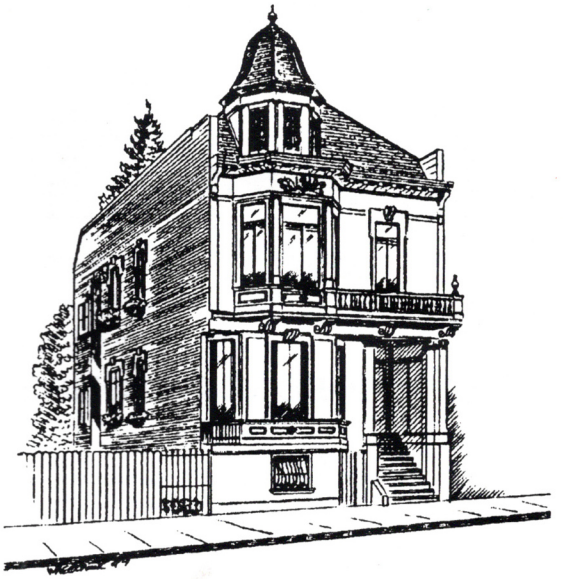

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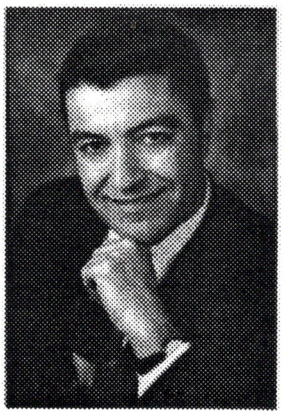

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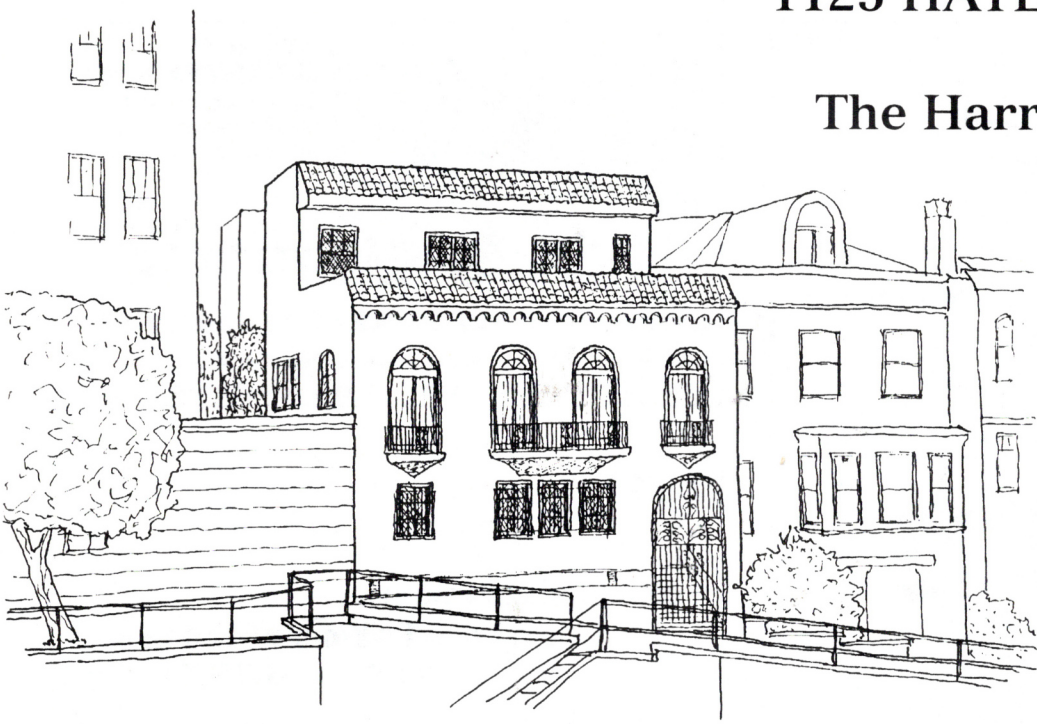
Tour House #8

1125 HAYES STREET

The Harris House



1125 HAYES ST. . . . © 97 JRW.

On one of the last of the neighborhood's plots to be developed, carpenter-builder Phil Harris built the Spanish colonial-revival residence at 1125 Hayes for his family at a cost of $7,000 in 1930.

City directories first list Mr. Harris in 1919 when he worked as foreman at an ornamental iron works at Ninth and Minnesota. In the 1920's, he switched to carpentry, and, as a builder, he is responsible for three, six-story corner apartment buildings in the Alamo Square area: 700 Steiner (at Hayes), built in 1927; 1290 Grove (at Divisadero), in 1929; and 575 Pierce, next door, which Mr. Harris started 6 months before building his own house.

1125's exterior features a stucco facade and slanted, red-tiled roofs. Multi-paned doors distinguish the third level; arched windows capped by fan lights and fronted by wrought iron balconies, the second level.

The dwelling's interior is impressively intact. The flooring, with a diamond shaped parquet border, is oak. Wood trim and the arched, multi-paneled doors are mahogany. Original Art Deco chandeliers and wall sconces light the rooms.

In the Asian tradition, shoes are doffed before one ascends to the family areas. Upstairs, off a small vestibule, is the park-facing living room, with plaster walls, vaulted ceiling and four large windows overlooking Alamo Square. A griffin motif decorates a white ornamental fireplace mantle on the west wall.

The well-preserved period dining room has vintage lighting and unpainted rounded wood doors. On the upper level, bathroom floors and wainscot are decorated in period tiles: the master's in lavender and turquoise and the children's in pink and blue. From the street facing master bedroom two pair of double-sashed doors open onto a wood-planked balcony with sweeping views that capture the spires of St. Ignatius to the west, Alamo Park to the north, and the hills of downtown to the east.

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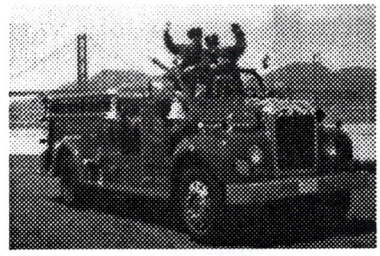

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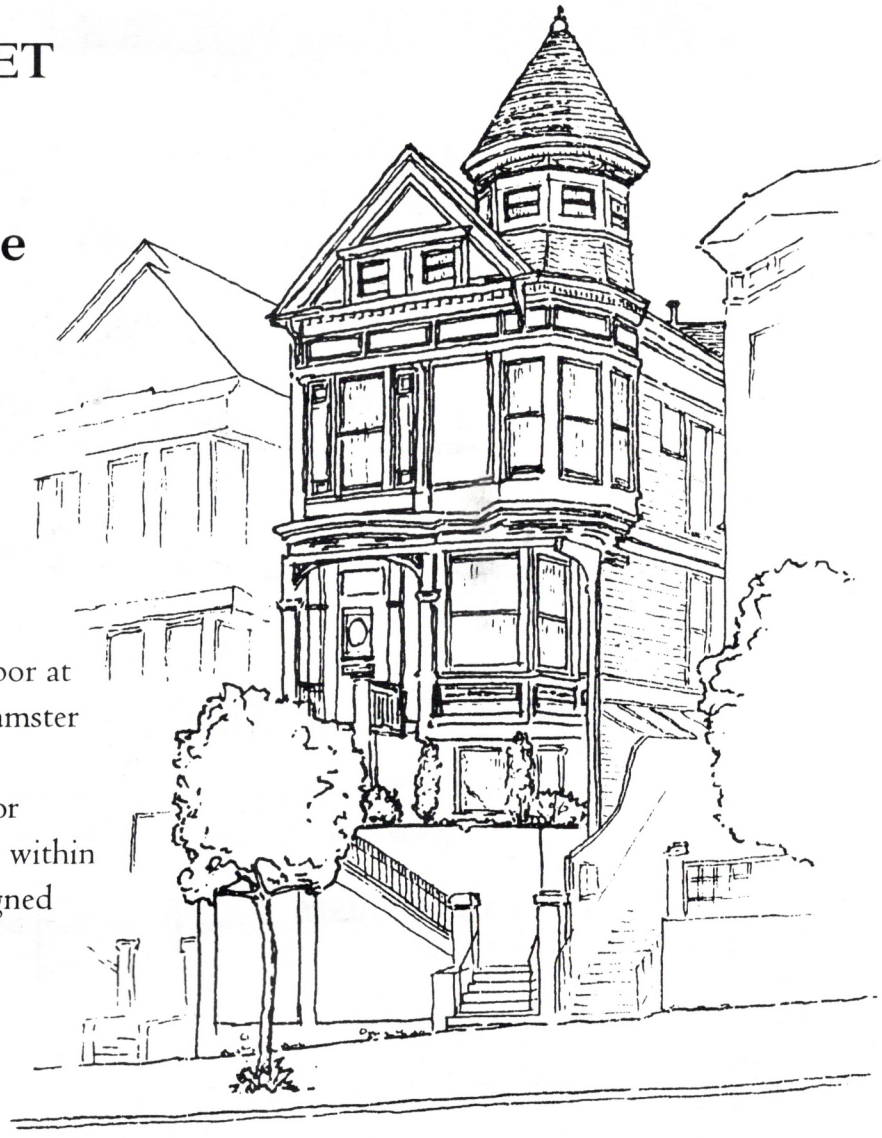
Tour House #9

1021 HAYES STREET

The Mohrdick House



The turreted Queen Anne residence at 1021 Hayes and its double-gabled neighbor at 1015 were both constructed in 1891 for teamster Martin H. Mohrdick and his family. The architects, Martens and Coffey, responsible for eight other remarkably attractive structures within the Alamo Square Historic District, designed this pair of Victorian town houses in their first year of practice. Contractors built both structures for $8,240.

Martin Mohrdick (1856-1925) was born in Schleswig Holstein, migrated from Germany to the United States when he was 19, and arrived in San Francisco by 1877. He, along with his wife and four children and a border, lived at 1021 for 16 years and their descendants continue to reside in the Bay Area.

Exterior features include a castle-like tower, gabled roof-line, bay windows, stonework staircase, and arched entry porch. The interior retains such vintage features as fireplace tiles depicting child-oriented domestic scenes, original doors with highly detailed brass hardware, moldings and ceiling medallions. Of particular interest is the fourth floor tower room that overlooks Alamo Square.

When purchased by the present owner in the early 1970s, the house had changed hands over 14 times and was in dire need of extensive renovation. In addition to a new roof and major upgrades to plumbing and electrical systems, thirty interior doors and a major portion of the stairway were stripped and refinished.

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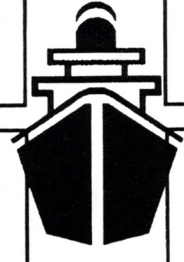

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Tour House #10

1099 HAYES STREET

Ida B. Wells High School
The Old Denman Grammar School

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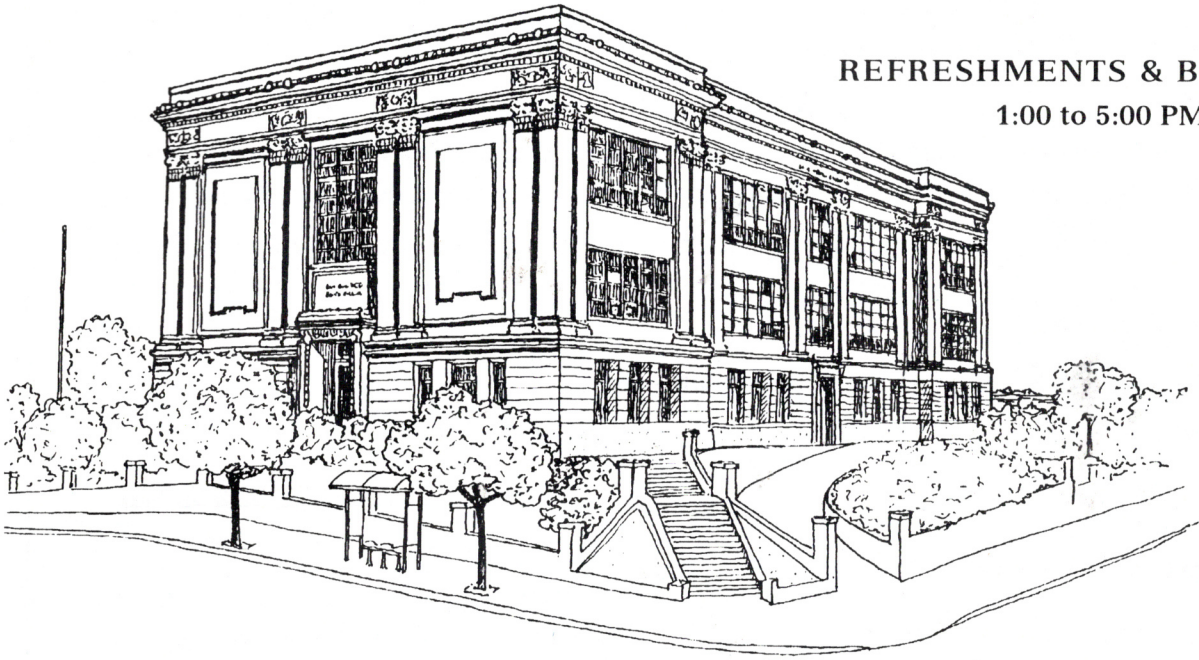
1:00 to 5:00 PM



IDA B. WELLS HIGH SCHOOL © JKW.'92

Built in 1910, this classically designed and ornamented Edwardian-era school house reflects the Beaux Arts training of its architect, Newton Tharp. Its steel frame construction is finished with pressed-brick and terra cotta while quarter-sawn oak is incorporated throughout the interior. It replaced an earlier Denman school that had operated at the northwest corner of Bush and Taylor for 41 years until destroyed by the 1906 earthquake and fire.

The school's original namesake, James Denman (1829-1909), "chief of the pioneer teachers of San Francisco", was principal of the City's first free school – The Happy Valley School at Second and Minna. In the early days, Denman evicted squatters at rifle point from prospective school sites and demolished the shacks erected by other claim jumpers so many times they finally gave up.

Subsequently known as the Louise Lombard School and later as Alamo Park High, a group of students, teachers, parents and community members voted in 1992 to rename 1099 Hayes in honor of Ida B. Wells (1862-1931), an African American educator, journalist, lecturer and civil rights activist. Born to slave parents, Mrs. Wells' struggle to focus national and international attention on the struggles of Black Americans to achieve equality under the laws of the United States is documented in her autobiography "Crusade for Justice".

Newton Tharp (1869-1909), nominated by one critic as one of San Francisco's most progressive designers, is also responsible for the old brick Italian Renaissance-style San Francisco General Hospital, the Dewey Monument in Union Square, and Fire House #2, located at 460 Bush Street.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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Please mail to: The Victorian Alliance, 824 Grove Street, San Francisco, CA 94117.

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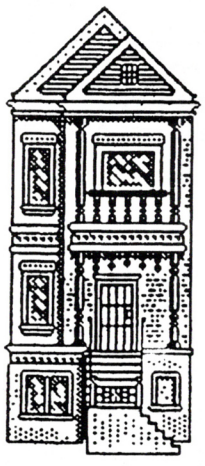

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Mail to:
The Alamo Square Neighborhood Association, P.O. Box 15372, San Francisco, CA 94115

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- Lloyd Anderson, Bill Campbell, Roger McNeill, Jeanette Mertes, Joe Pecora

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Doll Collection on display at 1021 Hayes Street – Courtesy of Margerie and Gordon Grannis

Guidebook
- Drawings.....Jack Walsh
- Histories.....Joe Pecora
- Advertising.....Cathy Furniss
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- Ann Austin, *Principal, Ida B. Wells School*
- Sondra Lander, *Manager, Archbishop's Mansion*
- Father Anastassy Newcombe and Mother Maria, *The Old Cathedral of the Holy Virgin*
- The Docents, Ticket Sellers, Cookie Bakers and Refreshment Helpers
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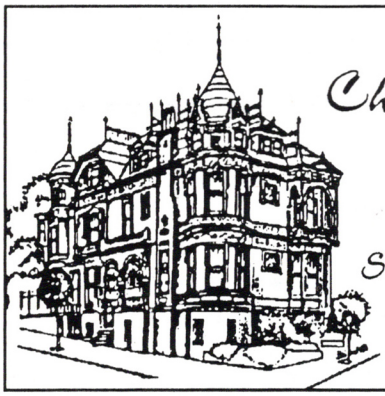
and all the other workers and helpers who make this event possible.

Early 1900's German doll from the collection of Margerie and Gordon Grannis, on display at House #9, 1021 Hayes Street.



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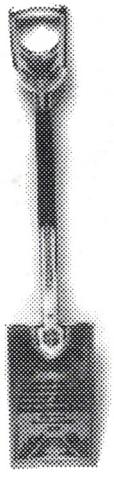

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The interior of this venerable Gothic cathedral is fashioned entirely of California redwood, and resembles the vaulted, medieval cathedrals of Europe. Adorning the upper walls are beautiful stained-glass windows, originally hand-crafted in England, which when pierced by sunlight fill the interior with a variegated, luminous glow. Below these hang the traditional icons. A profound and sacred atmosphere warmly welcomes all who enter.

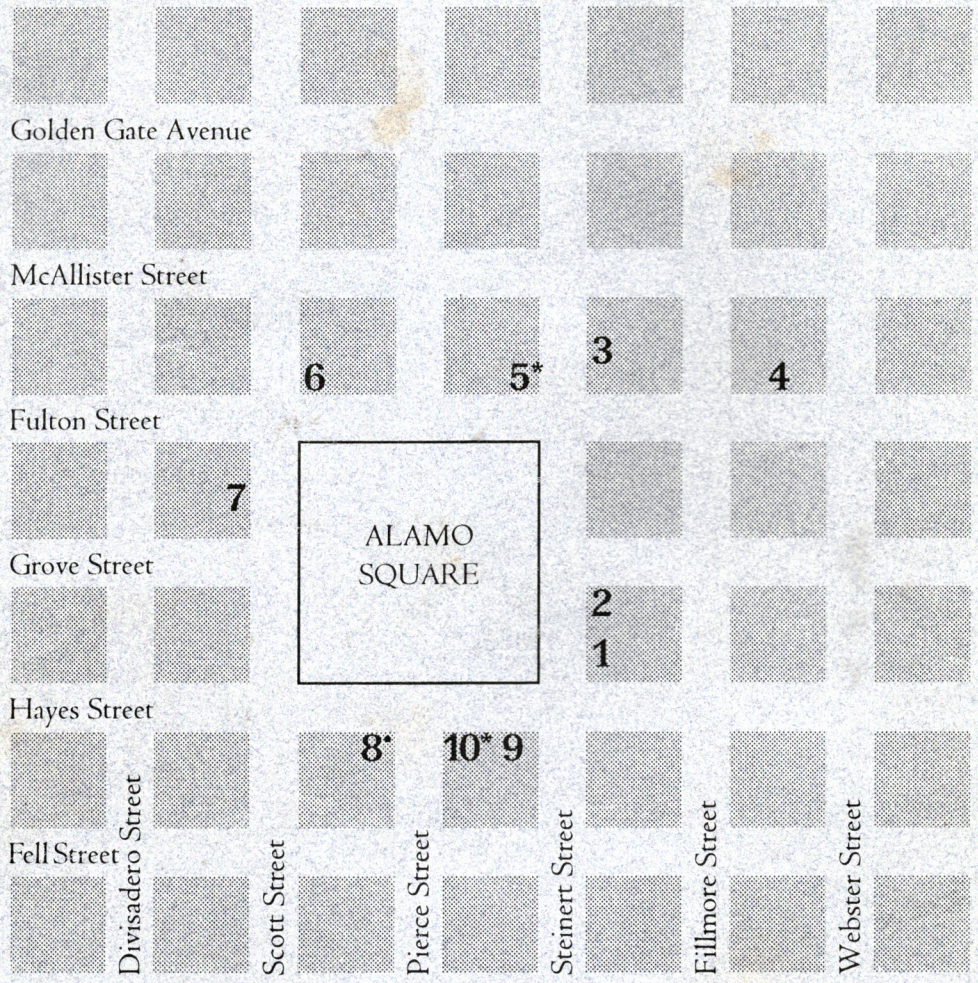
Time and the elements have, however, taken their toll on the Old Cathedral which is now in need of significant restoration. It has been brought to our attention by building professionals that the Church has major deterioration in the roof and the front façade of the building, as well as in the framing of some of the precious stained glass windows. It would be a tragedy to allow this venerable Cathedral to continue to deteriorate. A prompt response to correct and repair this damage will ultimately prove to be cost-effective. The exterior of the Cathedral is also in desperate need of repainting, so as to restore it to its pristine beauty and dignity. Along with the renovation of the Cathedral building proper, it is also necessary to renovate the antiquated Cathedral kitchen, with its outdated, frequently-failing plumbing, and inadequate applicances.

To preserve this treasured Cathedral, which has graced the Alamo Square neighborhood for over 100 years, your generous support is vital. Here is a unique opportunity to help preserve an extraordinary historical landmark which also continues to serve the community as a functioning church, and if you are in the vicinity on Sundays, please consider visiting the Old Cathedral between 9am and 6pm.

The architecture of the past remains with us, and often long after the fruits of other noble endeavors have crumbled away. By joining with us in the effort to restore the Old Cathedral, you help to maintain an extraordinary architectural landmark. Please make your gift payable to "The Old Cathedral of the Holy Virgin" and note in the lower left-hand corner "Restoration Project." May God reward you for your generosity.

The San Francisco Victorian Alliance and The Alamo Square Neighborhood Association

HOUSE TOUR of Alamo Square · October 17, 1999



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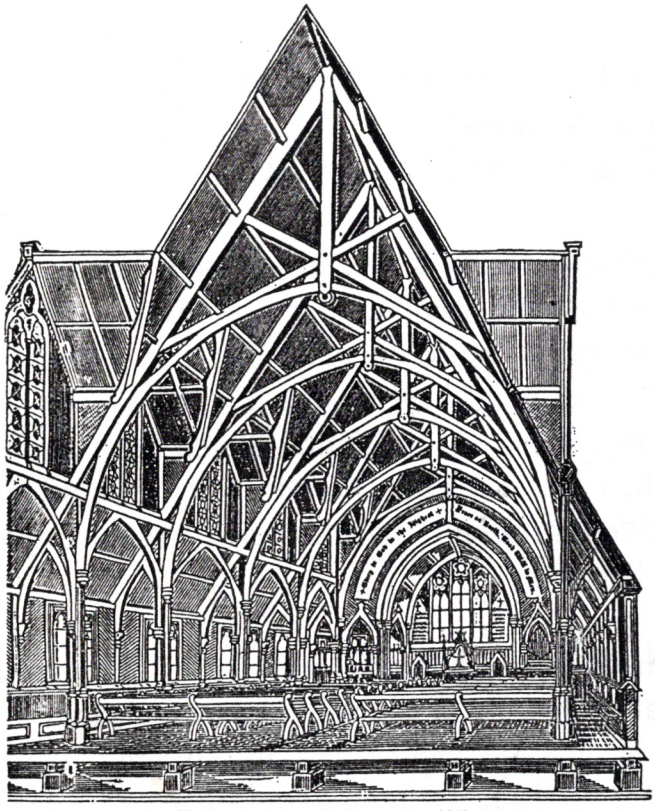
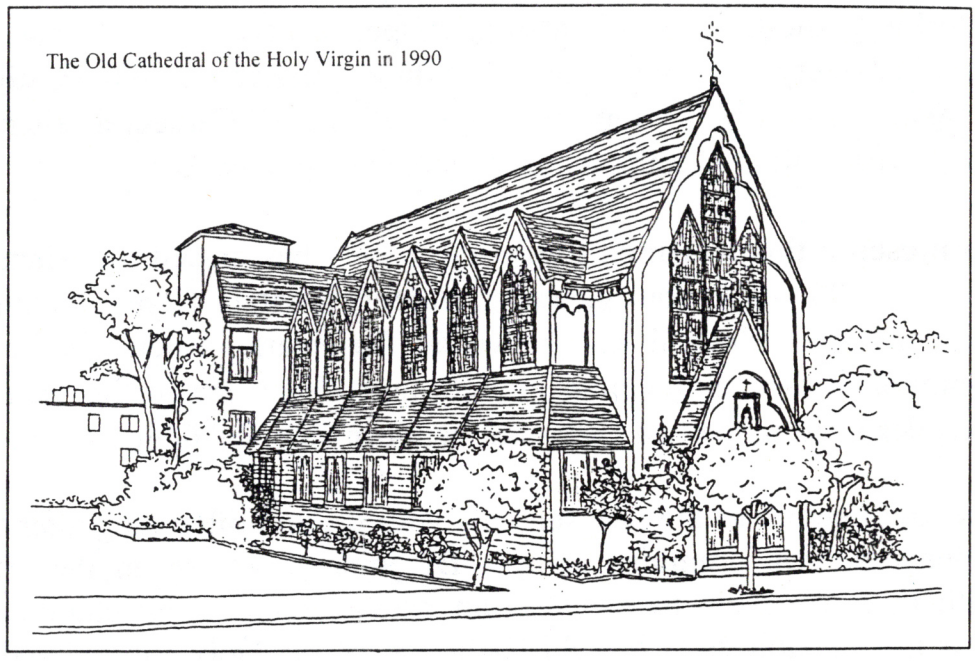


The interior of the Old Cathedral in 1880.

FOR CONSIDERATION

If you give alms to the poor, know that, insofar as you do good to your neighbour, you do it, and more, to yourself. St. Anthony says: "Life and death come to us through our neighbor." Here is a story of the elder Barlaam: A man had three friends; two of these he loved sincerely, but avoided the third because he found him boring. It so happened that the Emperor summoned the man to pay a debt. He turned to the first friend for aid, but he refused and went away. He asked help of the second, but he would not help him either. Somewhat shamefacedly, he turned to this third friend, who went—willingly—with the Emperor. The meaning is this: the first friend is riches, the second is family and kin, and the third is the good deeds of a man in this world. The Emperor is God, Who sends out His summons by means of death and demands payment of the debt. A man on the point of death looks for help from his riches, but they simply turn their back on him, and pass into the hands of another. Then he turns to his kinsmen, but they merely send him off and stay behind themselves. Then he begins to think about the good deeds which he performed so grudgingly while he was alive, and immediately these come with him on the road to the presence of the King and Judge. He who has ears to hear, let him hear. The soul's only companions into the other world are its deeds, be they good or bad. All that which is dear and precious to a man abandons him and turns its back on him; only his deeds, down to the very last one, go with him. He who has a mind to understand, let him truly understand.



The Old Cathedral of the Holy Virgin in 1990

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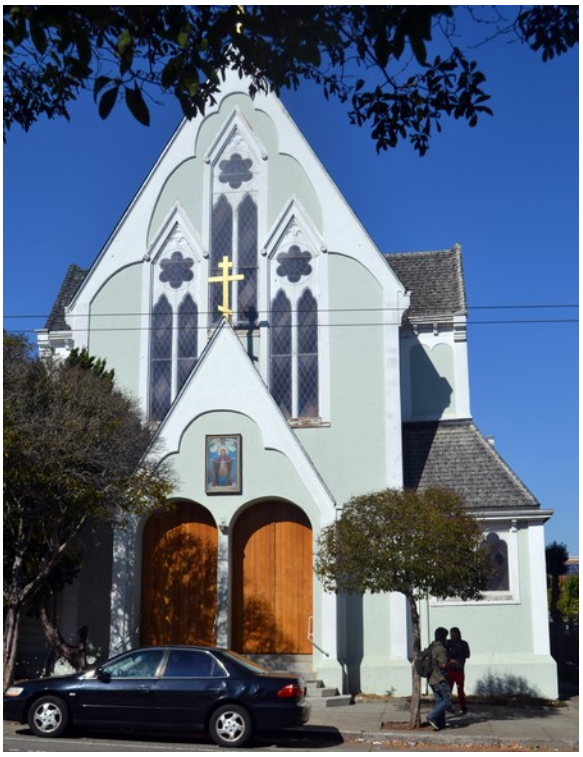

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upper left: 864 Fulton
upper right: 1000 Fulton
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Photos October 20, 2018

upper left: 1198 Fulton
upper right: 709 Scott
bottom: 1125 Hayes

Photos October 2018

top: 1099 Hayes (Oct. 21)
bottom: 1125 Hayes (Oct. 20)